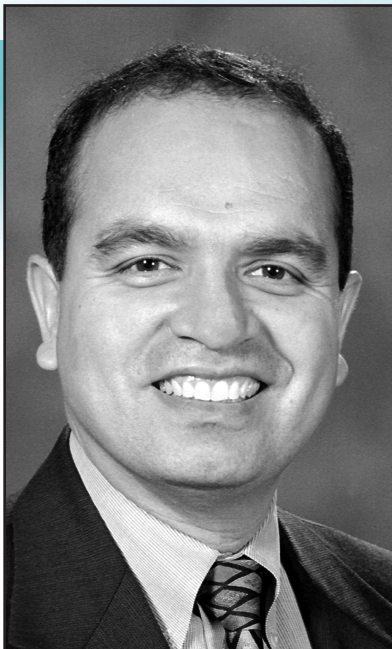


2005 SUMMER



# Senior Update

*Serving the 22th District*

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## Senior-friendly Tax Measures

Too often, those who file their state income tax returns using paper forms have found that their refunds take far longer to receive than electronic returns. This can be distressing, especially for seniors, who often depend on their returns to provide for necessary but expensive items such as prescription drugs, and to help pay their taxes.

To assist seniors in receiving their refunds in a timely manner, legislation has been introduced that requires the state Department of Treasury to notify a taxpayer, within ten days, whose return is selected for manual review. The Treasury will also be required to include an approximate time frame for the review and contact information for someone at the department who can assist the taxpayer with any questions.

Additional legislation has been introduced that will raise the income threshold, for people who qualify, to defer the due date of their summer taxes until February 15. Currently at \$25,000, the bill

increases the allowable gross household income to \$35,000 in 2005 and eventually to \$40,000 in 2007. Due to the recent date change to summer for collection of county taxes, many people have increased tax bills. This legislation will definitely be helpful to seniors who have been financially impacted by the tax date change.

## Order Free Annual Credit Report

To prevent Michigan residents from becoming victims of identity theft, which thousands of Americans fall prey to each year, credit reports can be obtained for free, once a year. To obtain a copy of your report, go online to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call toll-free 1-877-322-8228. Use caution when ordering your report, especially online, and be aware of scams and fraudulent sites. Check out the Consumer Alert posted by the Michigan Attorney General at [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag) for helpful information.

# Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

A durable power of attorney for health care is a legally recognized document through which you can appoint another person, (called a patient advocate) to make medical treatment and related personal care decisions on your behalf. Your patient advocate could be a spouse, an adult close friend or other individual. You should

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*Your patient advocate could be a spouse, an adult close friend or other individual.*

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choose someone you can trust to handle such a responsibility and who is willing to serve as your patient advocate. (Your advocate must be at least 18 years old.)

Your patient advocate can make decisions only if you are determined to be medically unable to take part in medical treatment decisions. Examples of such inability include: unconsciousness, serious confusion, delusion, or dementia.

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care allows your patient advocate to make decisions on your behalf, such as:

- Consent or refusal to receive medical treatment;
- Arranging for home health care/day care;
- Admittance to a nursing home/home for the aged;
- Organizing medical and personal care services and payment for those services, using your funds.

A patient advocate does not have the power to handle all your property and finances. To do so requires other legal documents, which should be prepared with the

help of an attorney. It is important to remember that a patient advocate does not have the authority to withhold or withdraw medical treatment if it is likely to cause your death, unless you have specifically given the patient advocate such optional authority to make such life and death decisions on your behalf, in your Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care.

If you would like a copy of the Peace of Mind booklet, which includes further information on the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, please contact my office.

## Grandparent Visitation

### *Guidelines Enacted*

I am very pleased to say that legislation to restore grandparent visitation was passed into law in January.

PA 542 of 2004 allows grandparents to seek grandparenting time under one or more of the following circumstances:

- Pending or finalized divorce, separate maintenance or annulment of child's parents;
- Parent of child is deceased;
- Parents have never married and are not residing in the same household and paternity has been established;
- Unless otherwise provided, legal custody of the child has been given to a person other than the child's parent, or child does not reside in the home of the parent;
- Grandparent has provided previous (1 year) established custodial situation.

Grandparents perform a vital role in a child's learning experience and I am pleased that Michigan has acknowledged and honored this role..